

The little girl from Eastern Aleppo

New year's night, January 1, 2017

This girl had come out of Eastern Aleppo after four dark years of occupation by Western-backed terrorists – too many to name.

People who for no reason had destroyed her home, her part of that beautiful city.

Perhaps half of her life living in fear, perhaps having lost family members. I do not know.



"The Little Girl From Eastern Aleppo" – © Jan Oberg 2016

I met her on December 14 at the Jibrin reception and registration centre in Western Aleppo where Syrian soldiers and volunteers from Aleppo University had just given her this bread with some vegetables inside.

She was one of thousands, old and young people who had been hit by unspeakable evil, death and destruction.

Victims of the dozens of conflicting parties and their criminal games. Destroying her life, her family, livelihood and her home town. Of which there is nothing left. Nothing.

It was a rainy gray day. She was in a queue to get this little and she was so very grateful. So hopeful. A little to eat to begin all over again.

Her standing there, her gesture. And the media tell you that Eastern Aleppo fell, that it wasn't liberated? Ask this girl.

Grasp her gratitude for what little most of the world take for granted. And those eyes.

I could not hold back tears in mine when I shot this image. Neither while I returned to process it and now writing this.

I'm a peace researcher and art photographer. The two sides come together in this image. It's the most important among thousands of pictures I took in 2016. Perhaps in all my years.

I have no wishes for myself this year. Have everything.

But I have many other wishes.

That this little but formidably strong girl and the thousands of other children and adults of Aleppo will live in some little peace in 2017.

That they will have the strength to return to what is left of their homes, if anything, and rebuild them. Go to a school and play in safety.

That the inhuman international “community” – it *is* no community – will lift the sanctions on Syria and show their humanity. Sanctions only hit innocents like her.

That she will live forever in security and peace and that she will not carry traumas from her childhood for the rest of her life.

That she will be able to, eventually, forgive the satanic forces who did this to an innocent child.

And that I may go back in 2017 and find her and ask how I can help her.

That’s the very, very least I can do in gratitude for what she has taught me about the utter meaninglessness and cruelty of war.

No I can’t. I can’t wish anybody dead.

But I can express my rage through Bob Dylan. Who, fifty-three years ago, spoke to [“The Masters Of War”](#) – and I include the arms traders among them – thus:

And I hope that you die
And your death’ll come soon
I will follow your casket
In the pale afternoon
And I’ll watch while you’re lowered
Down to your deathbed
And I’ll stand over your grave
‘Til I’m sure that you’re dead.